

**ST. HELENS MIST**

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## THE COUNTY OFFICIAL PAPER

## RECORDS VS. BUNCOMBE.

On pages 3 and 6 of this issue will be found a tabulated statement of the figures concerning the construction of the Columbia Highway in Columbia County, under the supervision of State Highway Engineer Bowlby, together with a statement prepared and issued by the members of the County Court who are recalled. Some interesting and startling figures are given in that table, and the figures are absolutely correct, having been compared by the County Clerk and certified to by him as correct. In the statement also appears the figures as given by State Highway Engineer Bowlby in his report furnished to the Highway Commission and to other people, the figures not included. A study of the table will disclose that in several instances the cost to complete the work on a certain classification of road section will be more than was originally estimated by the State Highway Engineer, and more than his original estimate has already been expended. The figures as taken from the records and compared with the figures submitted by the State Highway Engineer as to the amount of work already done and the amount it will take to finish the work, are most astounding. They should be carefully read and re-read, studied and digested by every taxpayer in Columbia County. The report of the Engineer when compared with the records of this county is apt to convince some people who are not familiar with the figures heretofore, that there was some grounds at least for the complaints of incompetency and extravagance in the work of building roads in Columbia County under the direction of the State Highway Engineer. In a study of the figures will be a liberal education along the lines of spending the public funds by men who have no particular interest in the same except to spend them. The table and report are rather long and will require some patience for the people to thoroughly read them over, but after getting into the comparisons once it will be found to be an interesting pastime to compare the figures submitted by the State Highway Engineer after expending thousands of dollars in surveying so that he could make an intelligent estimate, with the figures of the published report of the Engineer.

If he was so far wrong on his original estimates what assurance is there that his estimates of what it will take to finish the work are not just as unreliable? According to his report it will require \$183,661.77 to complete the work as originally planned by him, thereby making the cost of the work \$401,973.52 which he said before the contract was let would not cost more than \$280,751.30. If on a contract of that size and magnitude he cannot come within \$121,222.22 of guessing, is it to be considered good business judgment for the State of Oregon to keep a man of that kind to have charge of the expenditure of millions of dollars of the taxpayers money?

The table and statement of facts as prepared and submitted by the old Court are published for the purpose of showing the condition of affairs in Columbia County under Major Bowlby's administration of road construction and engineering. There is absolutely nothing to be gained by the members of the old Court other than to lay before the people the exact standing of affairs and to show the reason why they lost faith and confidence in the ability and competency of State Highway Engineer Bowlby and his assistant Mr. Griswold. After reading this report, comparing the figures as recorded by the Major with the figures submitted by him in his report, it is quite evident that the Court was justified and any other Court in the land would have taken the same course of looking after the affairs of the county themselves, instead of trusting it to men who showed so little regard for actual facts and who, either deliberately or through ignorance, misled the court and the people.

As to the controversy between Mr. Griswold and Judge Harris about the conversation reported by Mr. Griswold, it will be presumed that it is just a question of veracity between the two men. But taking into consideration the character and standing of Judge Harris in Columbia County for a long time, and comparing some of the other statements made by Mr. Griswold which are proven absolutely unreliable and misleading together with the

fact that several other men are ready to swear in Court, if necessary, that Mr. Griswold told them the same thing as Judge Harris claims he said, there can be no other conclusion reached by fair minded people who have any desire to learn the truth of the matter, than that Judge Harris is telling the absolute truth, and that the statement of Mr. Griswold was made for a purpose other than informing the people of the true situation.

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## IMPORTANT WORK YET.

About six days are left for the Legislature to finish its labors. Already a number of laws have been passed, but very few of statewide importance. Several of this kind of bills have passed one house or the other but the last week of the session will find the work of greatest importance to be acted upon by both houses. The amending of the compensation act, the prohibition bill, the consolidation of various departments and other general appropriation bills remain to be finally decided upon. In addition to these there are hundreds of bills of minor importance, as well as a few others of general importance.

The compensation act which has been in force the past year is up for amendment in several forms. Some of the legislators are anxious to substitute an entirely new law for the present one while others are working for a few amendments to the present law. Just at present it would seem that the wisest policy would be to keep the present law, with probably a few amendments as to classifications and give it a thorough test. It is hardly the right time to make such sweeping changes as would have the effect of destroying all the work started under the present law. No doubt it would be good policy from an economical standpoint to merge or consolidate some of the departments, such as the Labor Commissioners and the Industrial Welfare, and others relating to labor, with the Industrial Accident Commission, but to entirely change the Compensation law would be most unwise at this time.

The matter of merging other departments seems to be up to the members of the Legislature in order to keep their promises to the people prior to election. Hardly a member of that body who did not promise some cutting of expenses along those lines, and that there is plenty of room for such action is very apparent. It is quite probable that the consolidation and merging of some of the boards and commissions will be effected, without impairing the efficiency of the state government.

In the matter of prohibition, it would seem that the bill as passed by the House should be materially amended by the Senate before it is passed by that body. The people of Oregon last November said by a great majority that prohibition in Oregon should mean what it said. The bill as passed by the House appears to be an attempt to compromise on the matter, and in that compromise the will of the people has been, to a large extent, overlooked and set aside. It provides that each man or family shall have the privilege of buying 24 quarts of beer and 2 quarts of whisky each 30 days, but that none of these products shall be purchased in Oregon. Under the present law there are many millions of dollars invested in breweries in Oregon and these plants are required under the constitutional amendment to close on January 1, 1916. With the closing of these industries it will be necessary for people who want to buy beer to do so from parties outside the state, and it is fairly safe to say that not a great per centage of beer drinkers will consume more than 24 quarts each 30 days even now. Thus the bill as passed by the House seems to be anything but prohibition. If the people want prohibition they should have prohibition. Prohibition does not mean the indiscriminate buying and drinking of a quart of beer a day, practically. If prohibition is not what the people meant last November, the breweries and saloons should be permitted to run under the license system.

It is apparent that the so-called prohibition bill as passed by the House needs fixing by the Senate before it will meet the requirements of the people.

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## ST. HELENS FIRE DEPARTMENT.

Many words of commendation have been said by the Mist in the past year or two about the St. Helens Fire Department. With each succeeding fire it becomes more evident that the boys who are holding together the organization of firemen in this city are performing a work that is almost wonderful. A perfect organization and discipline at fires is maintained, that would do credit to a paid department in a larger city. Every man knows his place and is found in that place performing the duties assigned to him. The Chief gives his orders to the boys in a manner that is best fitted to maintain the respect for him and his office and there is absolutely no confusion in the handling of a fire by the St. Helens Fire Department. The work being done by the boys is heartily appreciated by the citizens of the city.

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